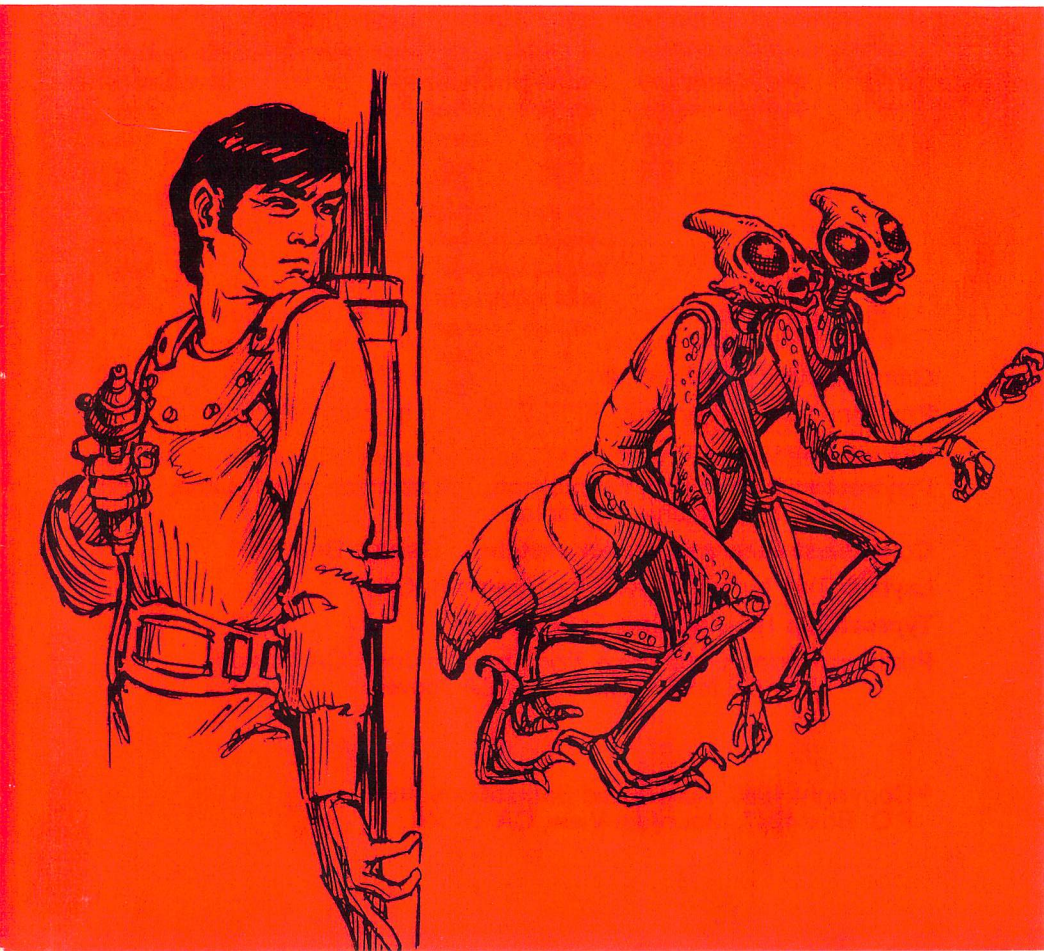
COMPUTER GAMES THINKERS PLAY

EPYX

STARQUEST
RESCUE AT RIGEL



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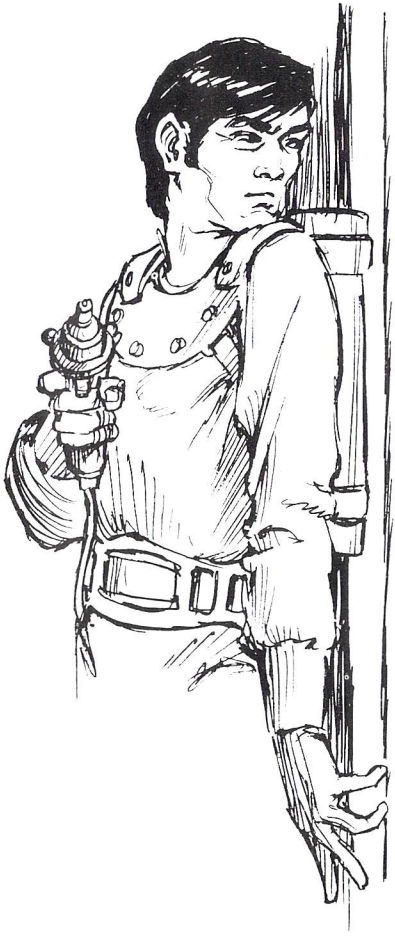
DEDICATION



To: Flash Gordon
Buck Rogers
Hawk Carse
Buzz Corey
Lucas Trask
Lazarus Long
Kimball Kinnison
Logan the Sandman
Captain Sir Dominic Flandry
Mr. Spock & James T. Kirk
Bad News Quillan & Trigger Argee
Richard Seaton, M. Reynolds Crane,
& Blackie DuQuesne
and, of course,
Han Solo, Luke Skywalker,
& Princess Leia Organa

May they live again in our games
—and forever in our hearts.

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The incurably impatient may read the summary on the first page and then go directly to *How to Play* (or even skip down to *COMMANDS*): that will allow you to play the game promptly if not well. Those less in a hurry will find that while *How to Play* explains the basic rules and procedures, the sections on *The Game Situation, The Aliens,* and *The Alien Complex* add further useful detail. *The Saga of Sudden Smith* is for color, background, and ORION fans.

INTRODUCTION

In the arenas of our imagination, not all of our heroes (or heroines!) wear rent black armor or shining silver mail, cleave barbarian foes on a wind-swept deck, or face a less clean fate at the hands of some depraved adept whose black arts were old when the world was young. Science fiction propels us aboard space-faring ships like *Enterprise, Hooligan, Little Giant, Millenium Falcon, Nemesis, Nostromo, Sisu, Skylark,* and *Solar Queen* into starry seas neither storm-tossed nor demon-haunted but no less daunting for all that—and lands us on brave new worlds whose shapes and sights and sounds are more plausible—but no less astonishing—than any seen by Sinbad.

STARQUEST was conceived to complement our popular DUNJONQUEST series—to bring the man-to-man excitement of our fantasy role-playing system into the science-fiction universe of *Starfleet Orion* and *Invasion Orion*. We have retained the fine graphics, the multitude of command options, the tension of real-time decision-making, the suspense of limited intelligence, and the thrill of the quest, but magic has been replaced by the wonders of technology; sword and shield, spells and armor, have become blaster and powergun, force fields and bionic augmentation. In STARQUEST you may explore an alien moonbase, a ruined city, a spaceship a kilometer long, or a relic from another time; fight robots, armed sapients, or beings of pure energy; discover the secrets of a forgotten civilization, sabotage a weapon that could destroy planets, or rescue humans held captive by a hostile alien race.

If you grew up with Ming the Merciless, PLANET STORIES, *Space Patrol, Forbidden Planet,* or *Star Trek*—if you prefer lightsabers to broadswords and blaster bolts to fireballs (or a change of pace from the old hack-and-hew)—if you like your science fiction full of excitement and flavored with a grain of salt, a measure of mystery, a dash of difficulty, a leavening of humor, and a fistful of the fantastic, join us on a STARQUEST!

THE SAGA OF SUDDEN SMITH

Years before he became a hero fighting the Dirge and a household name in the battle they called Armageddon, between the times he lost and found Ameena Chung, there was another woman . . . .

Sudden Smith checked the Vulcan LD PowerPack for the third time.—Not the powerpack's charge or condition: that he'd done a dozen times during the trip. No, the straps that looped over his shoulders, adjusted to just the right length, tight but not binding; the webbing of the broad belt, secure around his middle, inset with touch controls for shield and com gear, connecting holster and powerpack, keeping it from bouncing or shifting. It was neither heavy nor awkward, really, but the weight felt odd, like a baby riding on his back, little arms clenched about his neck.

He willed the AMBLE circuits on inside him, and the world slowed. Readouts leaped at him from across the room, their crimson blur resolving into numbered distinction; shadows darkened; the consoles stood out like a flat picture suddenly seen in three dimension; the

unheard hum of the ship at rest grew loud and demanding; and the voice of his battlemate boomed deep, distorted by slowness.

"What?" he said, switching the AMBLE system off again.

"You don't have to go through with this, you know," Luciano repeated.

Smith laughed, releasing the tension held in check. "What would you do with the ship, just give it back?"

"We'd think of something."

"We?"

"Yeah, *we*. I wasn't the one who needed a ship for some Crazy Larry quest. And let me tell you it wasn't easy finding one to fit your specifications, either."

"Hey, I know, Luc, and I appreciate it."

"But you're going ahead with it."

"Of course."

"I should have my brains probed. You, too, except they wouldn't find anything there. Why us? Why you?" he asked, echoing words spoken so often in days past, knowing the answer would be the same.

"Come on, Luc, who else cares enough about ten research scientists who spent the last two years out on some frozen ball of ice working on something few people ever heard of and fewer still would understand? The insurance companies are afraid to take the risk, and the only government around with a navy to speak of is the Stellar Union."

"Well, the whole thing's their fault, anyway; they *ought* to do something about it."

"Of course. But they won't. The Union navy doesn't exist to do anything useful. Besides, a large-scale attack is too risky: they're right about that, at least."

"And this cockaloonie idea isn't?"

"I didn't say that, but it gives me a lot better chance of getting her out alive."

"That's what it all comes down to, isn't it?" Luciano said sourly. "A woman."

"Not just a woman. Delilah." When Luciano looked unappeased, Smith continued, "Besides, there are nine other people down there—good people, the ones I've met: Fred, Carlos, Kipchoge. Granted, I wouldn't be here if it weren't for Delilah, but none of them deserves this. Human beings are not laboratory animals, not guinea pigs to be pushed and poked and prodded, inspected and dissected, ordered, scheduled, and kept on a leash. That's not what people are for!"

"Take it easy, Sudden. This is old Luciano you're talking to, and I'm not arguing; I'm worrying."

Smith gave a short but genuine grin and relaxed a trifle. "Sorry, Luc. Just nerves. I guess I'm not that eager to go down there, either. But that's the way the comet tumbles, as they say." He stepped into place, took a deep breath and let it out. "Let's go," he said decisively.

"*You're* going; *I'm* staying," grumbled Luciano, but his fingers did

not hesitate at the controls for the transporter beam.

Smith began to tingle, lost the world for a moment, and had to stifle the old familiar urge to stretch and scratch as a strange room grew around him, large and hot, damp and empty. Near what appeared to be a concealed airlock was a spacesuit locker. The suits it held were two-legged but not designed for people. Aside from some containers he couldn't identify, there was nothing else, no sign anyone ever came there.

At opposite ends of the room were a pair of large ovals, outlined in bright colors, that had to be doorways. They both had the fuzzy, shifting opacity of force fields, though the smaller one was overdue for maintenance. The field rippled, out of sync, and the door hummed faintly. He decided to try it, anyway: he didn't want a well-traveled path just yet.

He stepped through . . .

. . . And found himself in a cleared space in a crowded room, three feet from a startled insectoid of the sort that might have fit the spacesuits. *So much for bright ideas*, he thought. His finger was squeezing the trigger of the powergun while both were still reacting with shock. The Tollah jerked, stiffened, and fell like a dead tree, its angular body disappearing into the mist at Smith's feet.

While the slight splash was still echoing, Smith darted to the right, down an aisle, and out another door. The new room was smaller, the size of the first one he'd entered, with a similar wide doorway at one end. Out a third door, however, came another Tollah, this one armed and in a strange harness that wrapped around his head and torso; what looked like a speaking cup extended up out of his chest. That alien, too, went down before the handblaster was out of its holster.

Deciding to be a bit more conservative with his energy, Smith thumbed the powergun down a few notches. Tollah didn't seem particularly resistant, and he might need the power later.

For lack of a better idea, he decided to try where the High Tollah had come from . . . .

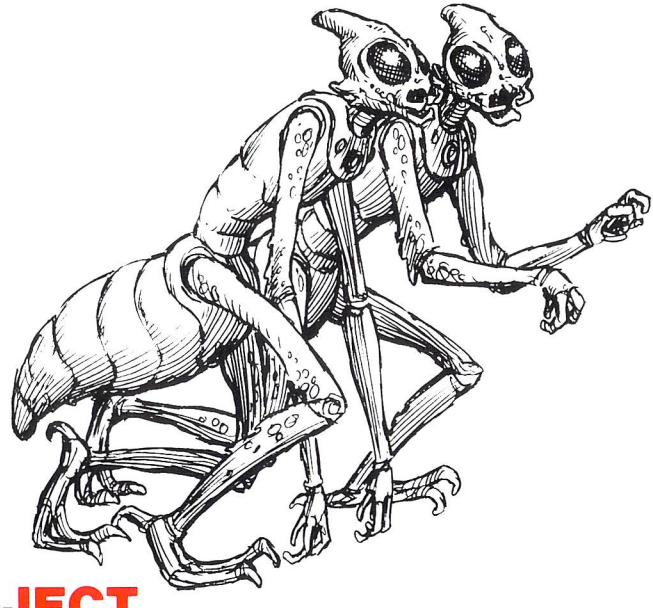
He found her in a room of harsh light and garish color, on a strangely shaped thing that might have been couch or bed or neither. She was wearing gold mesh and honey-colored skin, an outfit her coworkers claimed to have gotten used to. She hadn't heard him come in.

Seeing no one else about, he inquired quietly, "Do the Tollah find that as distracting as I do?"

"Sudden!" she cried, but there was more terror than warmth in her voice. His glance shifted as hers did, suddenly, jerkily, and a six-legged nightmare of jaws and claws sprang out of the mist.

He fired, but he'd left the gun set on medium . . . .

THE GAME SITUATION



THE OBJECT

In *Rescue at Rigel*, you take the part of Sudden Smith (a character you may remember from our ORION games), a human adventurer teleported down by transporter beam inside a six-floor, sixty-room complex inhabited by an alien race, the Tollah. Scattered throughout the base, which has been hollowed out of an asteroid orbiting Rigel, ten humans are held captive, one in each of ten different rooms. While you can adjust the difficulty of the task (see *LEVELS OF PLAY*), the object in all cases is the same: to search the complex, find and release as many of the prisoners as possible (by activating the transporter beam, which will teleport them back up to the ship), and get out alive—in an hour or less.

If the Tollah base can be likened to an iceberg, you begin the game at the tip: inside the top room, the only one that connects the complex with the surface of the asteroid. (Since there is no air and no escape on the asteroid itself, the door to the outside, being "off limits," is not shown on the display.) From this vestibule there are only two usable exits. The larger obviously leads to a gravshaft; the smaller looks like an ordinary doorway—but there are no other rooms on the floor. Whichever way you choose to begin your quest, there will be no turning back once you walk through the door.

In even the most straightforward arrangement, it would take a reasonable time just to search sixty rooms (perhaps necessary even the tenth time through, since you will not always find the prisoners in all the same places). In fact, however, you are hampered by ignorance (you don't know the layout) and the limited ways the rooms—and floors—connect. There are no stairs; going up and down is primarily a matter of utilizing the gravshafts—but they are strictly one-way propositions. The dropshaft will take you as far down as you wish to go, but to go back up you must find the liftshaft, which (alas) extends no higher than the third floor (down). To return higher than that—or to get to certain areas not otherwise accessible—you must use the teleportals: one-way doors that teleport you instantly from one room to another not physically connected—and, indeed, perhaps separated meters vertically and tens of meters horizontally.

Unfortunately for Sudden Smith (and you), there is no way to immediately distinguish teleportals from ordinary doors until after you have gone through (the position of the character in the room afterward will provide a clue). The radical changes of position caused by going unknowingly through a series of teleportals may give the human explorer an initial feeling of wandering in circles through a labyrinthine maze without beginning or end. With time, the location of the teleportals can be deduced, along with some sense of the relationship between the points of departure and the respective destinations. Since the controls are too complex to be understood in a few moments (and too difficult for human hands to manipulate), there will always be an element of unpredictability in the use of the teleportals.

While the limitations on graphics prevent any of the internal features of a room from showing, most chambers in the complex are full of chairs, tables, and other furniture; fixtures, consoles, and other scientific equipment; storage racks, crates, and boxes; and all the other paraphernalia of human or alien habitation. There are, thus, plenty of things to hide behind—and all too many places from which an alien might appear unexpectedly.

Your biggest advantage in the game, perhaps, is that you need not retrace your steps to find a way out; you carry your own exit with you. You can "bail out"—leave the complex—by transporter beam from any room, at any time—almost. Using this transporter beam (the T command: see *COMMANDS*) involves transmitting a low-power tight beam through layers of rock, steel, and shielding to the rescue ship somewhere in space (without being detected by Tollah monitors) and, after establishing communication, having the ship, in turn, send back a transporter beam to precisely the right spot in the complex (again, hopefully, without detection) to teleport you—or a prisoner—out. Even with the best equipment available, this is no easy task; the lower you are in the complex, the harder it is. It may,

in fact, require half a dozen attempts—which can be inconvenient if you're running out of energy and are under attack.

If your energy is gone, the only way out is to find your way back to your starting point (the topmost room in the complex) while the display reads TIME: 60. If you are in that vestibule in that minute, the ship will beam you up automatically. If you fail that rendezvous, you will be presumed dead, and the ship will leave without you. After that, it's only a matter of time until you *are* dead.

THE EQUIPMENT

Your equipment—and how to use it—is the only thing that will keep you "alive" beyond the first minute in the Tollah base. Without question, your most important piece of equipment is the powerpack, which, for practical purposes, may be considered a giant battery that provides the energy for the powergun, shield, and communication equipment. This enormous flexibility is also its Achilles heel; when the powerpack is depleted, *none* of that equipment functions. (This is why you also carry a blaster and have an emergency rendezvous.)

The Markham powergun (sometimes called a zapgun from the sound of its operation) is the standard model: a small, lightweight pistol connected by power and safety cords to its holster, which is in turn connected to the powerpack by the control belt. The Colt & Remington "Thunderbolt" Mark II blaster is a heavier, two-handed weapon—usually called a "rifle" even though there is no rifling in the barrel, and its effect is more like a shotgun. It is worn slung over the shoulder when not in use.

Despite their differences in appearance and function, the two guns are operated similarly in the game (by typing the F or B command). The various residents of the complex are detailed elsewhere (see *THE ALIENS* and the illustrations throughout the book), but you can presume them basically hostile to your mission. You need not be facing one to fire; nor is a preliminary aiming step required. To determine the success of your shot, the computer takes into account your (that is, Sudden Smith's) basic abilities and current fatigue level and the size, elusiveness, and distance of the target. (The giant plasmoid obviously makes a better target than the small, darting thornet, and of course it's easier to hit anything at point-blank range than across forty feet of furniture and equipment.)

The effects of the two guns vary considerably. A powergun beam acts directly on the nervous system of living creatures or the analogous circuitry of robots. It is a relatively quiet weapon. Above a certain minimum charge (which varies according to the nature of the target), a perfect shot will stop anything. The higher the charge, the less precise the aim need be. However, the effects of less-than-fatal beams are *not* cumulative; an inadequate charge or consistently bad luck

(giving you "hits" on a hindclaw, for example) may prevent any number of shots from doing any real damage whatsoever.

On the other hand, a blaster bolt will atomize a thornet, destroy a Tollah, and blow a hole in the hardest armor. An alien tough (and lucky) enough to withstand the first shot will probably be finished off by a second blast. Nothing in the game can survive three. Unfortunately, the noise of blaster explosions will bring the attention of anything in the neighborhood not already dead.

Which gun you choose for any battle will depend on the situation: the nature of the enemy, the amount of energy available for the powergun, its current setting, the number of blaster charges left. Because it can be set to a multitude of power levels to suit the size and nature of the target, and because it cannot "run out of ammunition" as long as energy remains in the powerpack, the powergun will be your primary weapon. Choosing a setting is obviously a major tactical decision, and only experience can be your ultimate guide. There is no one "right" setting—or there would be no way of varying it (and no P command). A powergun set to maximum is in most cases at least as effective as a blaster, but against a thornet—or even a Tollah—a charge of 9 (the maximum) is sheer overkill. And you don't have power to waste. While the blaster is not dependent on the powerpack, it cannot be used very often. Nor is it adjustable.

The shield works much like the starship shields in *Starfleet Orion* and *Invasion Orion*. It is not a material object; rather, it is a force field that, by absorbing a certain amount of incoming energy—kinetic, electromagnetic, or heat—reduces the damage done to the person screened by it. The shield is activated by a touch control on the belt, powered by the powerpack, and too "expensive" to have on all the time. With the shield off, the tough material of your clothing will provide some slight protection, but your best defense is Sudden Smith's reflexes. Since you move a fraction of a second ahead of the aliens, you can switch on your shield before an attack; alternatively, if you fire first, you may kill the alien before it has the chance to get a shot off.

If, despite the protection of the shield and your character's superior reactions, you are wounded by alien attack, you can heal yourself with the medikit. As with the blaster, the medikit's supplies are separate from the powerpack. In brief, when applied to a wound, the medikit covers it with a protective coating of plastiflesh (which contains a powerful coagulant to stop bleeding in seconds) and injects a series of drugs, which include a local anesthetic to block the pain, a sterilizing agent to prevent infection, and a regenerative stimulant to accelerate the healing process. The medikit is not, however, a magic wand: it will not bring you back from the dead, and a single treatment cannot heal severe wounds completely. On the other hand, since the treatments are limited, it's usually best to ignore minor wounds rather than wasting a dosage on a scratch.

The man who coined AMBLE (for "*a*ccelerated *m*ovement through *b*io-*e*lectronic *e*nhancement") obviously had a sense of humor. An incredibly complex (and expensive) system of bionic implants, bone reinforcement, drug triggers (e.g., metadrenaline), and a reshaped nervous system, the AMBLE system steps up certain bodily processes to allow action at twice normal speed. In game terms, this allows two moves/turns/commands in the same time that an alien gets only one. Activating the AMBLE system is voluntary (as is de-activating it), not automatic—and certainly not constant. While it takes no energy from the powerpack, the fatigue costs of being on AMBLE are substantial.

While the AMBLE system enhances all command options (in the sense of giving you a wider selection of commands in a given period of time) and can allow you to fire twice or move and fire in what would be a single turn, it is particularly effective while running, dodging, or meleeing. The first two are useful for rapidly crossing a room while under fire without using the resources required to shoot back. Dodging—moving erratically, ducking behind furniture, taking advantage of available cover—by itself enormously reduces the chances of being hit but is, naturally, tiring. Dodging while on AMBLE enhances the benefits but increases the fatigue costs.

Sudden Smith, a master at hand-to-hand combat, might dismantle even a sentry robot with nothing more than fists and feet, but it saves a good bit of wear and tear on your body to use a blaster or powergun. However, to conserve energy, or when power is gone and the blaster is empty, you can attack in the millenia-old manner: i.e., "melee." Unarmed combat is, of course, tiring, but its chief disadvantage is that to strike an alien you must be close enough for it to hit you back (or, if it is armed, for it to fire at point-blank range—which makes it difficult to miss). Since, with your shield off, your clothing is not the equivalent of a robot's armor or a cerbanth's chitin, merely *exchanging* blows is unattractive even against a Common Tollah; against a ferocious cerbanth (which normally gets three attacks to your one), it may well be fatal. What you want is a way of increasing the ratio of blows delivered to blows received—which is exactly what the AMBLE system does. In fact, the boost in speed caused by being on AMBLE also acts to increase the power of your blows, thus being doubly of assistance during melee. If you have to fight hand-to-hand, the AMBLE system effectively decreases the damage you would otherwise sustain, but you must end the fight quickly, or fatigue will soon render you helpless.

HOW TO PLAY

Since the rules of the game are actually programmed into the computer's memory, there is very little you need to know to play STARQUEST. However, the game is played in real time; attacking aliens won't wait for you; and mistakes can be costly. To make the best decisions during play, please read the following paragraphs carefully.

If you've played some of our DUNJONQUEST games before, some of the aspects of *Rescue at Rigel* will be familiar: the graphics (though not the artwork!), the use of the display, and the basic movement system. However, for STARQUEST we have added a new movement option (dodging), and the Combat and Special Commands are all new, as befits the change in context from fantasy to science fiction. If you take the time to acquaint yourself with these new options, you'll pursue a more enjoyable—and more successful—quest.

Good luck, and watch out for the cerbanths!

LEVELS OF PLAY

To keep *Rescue at Rigel* challenging over many playings, the game has three levels of play: Level 1 is the easiest; Level 3, the hardest. This variable affects such things as the number of medikits and blaster charges you begin with, the amount of energy in your powerpack, and the ease with which you can accomplish certain necessary tasks within the alien complex. You will probably find that your initial venture into the Tollah moonbase will be longer and more successful if you begin with Difficulty Level 1, but the choice, of course, is up to you.

Before you enter the complex, the computer will ask:

WHAT LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY DO YOU WANT (1,2,3)?

Enter the appropriate number and a carriage return. (This is the last time you will need to use a carriage return.)

SCORING

The object of *Rescue at Rigel* is to get the ten human prisoners—and yourself—out of the Tollah moonbase alive. Exploring all six floors, venturing into each room, or killing aliens is worth no points in itself, though any or all may be necessary to accomplish your mission. Essentially, the more prisoners you rescue and the faster you get out, the higher your base score will be. Your base score is then multiplied by the degree of difficulty you selected to obtain your final score for the session.

Not all the prisoners are of equal value. For example, because of her importance to Sudden Smith, Delilah Rookh is, naturally, worth the most points. As you will find after playing *Rescue at Rigel* a few times, the prisoners are not always located in the same rooms. How hard it is to get a captive out from a particular location is an additional (if minor) factor in the scoring.

Since personal survival is obviously important (some might say *vital*), there is a significant bonus for escaping from the base. However, since there is also an increasing risk of the rescue ship's being discovered the longer it waits in orbit, the sooner you beam aboard (and the ship leaves), the higher the bonus. Also, remember that the pilot is under strict instructions to leave after one hour—with or without you. After sixty minutes, therefore, since you cannot beam yourself or a prisoner aboard, you cannot increase your score further. Even if you are killed, however, you will still get credit for the captives you have freed.

Don't expect to rescue all ten prisoners on your first—or even your tenth—attempt. That goal is intended to be a challenge at any level of play. If you die on your first few ventures into the Tollah base, you will probably not score more than 100 points. With experience, you should be able to release at least half of the captives. At the highest level of difficulty, it is possible to exceed 1500 points, but such a score will require considerable practice and skill—and perhaps more than a bit of luck.

BEGINNING

Entering and Exiting the Alien Complex

When you begin play, you will be in a vestibule, a small room at the top of the complex, just beneath the surface of the asteroid. From that point, you are free to explore as you wish.

To leave the Tollah base you must get your ship to beam you back aboard. This can be done in either of two ways. The easiest is to use the **T** command (discussed below under *COMMANDS*). If you are not successful on your first attempt, keep trying: getting a signal through layers of rock, steel, and shielding to a ship a long distance away is a difficult and tricky proposition. **Important:** you may use the **T** command from any room in the complex. However, if a prisoner is in the same room with you, he (or she) will be beamed aboard the ship instead of you. To get yourself out, you would have to re-establish communication with the ship by using the **T** command again. Also, if your shield is *on*, its force field will interfere with the transporter beam; to beam aboard successfully, your shield must be *off* when you use the **T** command.

Finally, the **T** command (successful or not) takes a unit of energy from your powerpack. If you are out of energy (or so deep in the complex that you can't seem to establish contact with the ship), there is a final way out. If you can get back to the room in which you started

(the vestibule mentioned above) anytime during the sixtieth minute of your quest, the ship will automatically beam you aboard. After that time, *there is no way out of the base* (although you may continue playing). To help you keep track of this important consideration, the computer will keep a running display of your time in the Tollah moonbase.

Beaming aboard the rescue ship ends your quest; once aboard, you may not re-enter the alien complex except by starting over. Getting killed, of course, also ends your quest.

Gravshafts and Teleportals

Among the unique features of *Rescue at Rigel* are the two gravshafts: the dropshaft and the liftshaft. These resemble empty elevator shafts and act instead of stairs as direct vertical connections between floors of the Tollah base. The dropshaft is used for going *down* to lower floors; the liftshaft is used for going *up* to higher floors.

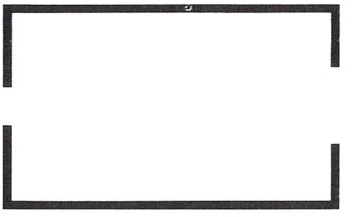
Operation of the gravshafts is simple. Once you enter one (which can be distinguished from the outside by its wide doorway), you begin slowly "falling" up or down, as the case may be. Each time you approach a new floor, the computer will flash "GOING DOWN" (in the dropshaft) or "GOING UP" (in the liftshaft). Naturally, when you reach the bottom of the six-story dropshaft or the top of the four-story liftshaft, you can go no further, and the computer will no longer display such messages. When you have descended/ascended to the floor you wish, simply turn around (if you have not already done so) and walk out normally. Unless you are at the bottom of the dropshaft (or the top of the liftshaft), you cannot get back out before rising/falling at least one floor.

The other set of "vertical" connections in the alien complex are the teleportals: one-way teleportation doors that link a room on one floor with a different room on another floor. Using a teleportal is just like using any other door (i.e., you just walk through it), and, indeed, since teleportals are (to human eyes, at least) indistinguishable from ordinary doors, it is easy to go through one accidentally. Since there are rooms that are impossible to get to—or get back to—just by using gravshafts and normal doors, you will probably want to use the teleportals sooner or later, anyway.

The Display

The computer both draws a picture of the room you are occupying and displays your status, including your physical condition, the power remaining in your powerpack, the time elapsed since you entered the alien complex, and other relevant information. Part of the display is reserved for reporting messages that are of immediate importance to you ***(see Figure 1)***. There are a number of possible messages, and more than one of these may appear at the same time. These messages are self-explanatory during play, but a few are included in Figure 1 as examples. The circled numbers in the figure correspond to the descriptions under the sample display.

Figure 1. Sample Display



① **VESTIBULE**
② **WOUNDS: 100%**
③ **FATIGUE: 100%**
④ **AMBLE: OFF**
⑤ **HE DIES!**
⑥ **ZAP!**
IT MISSED!
⑦ **SETTING: 8**
⑧ **CHARGES: 5**
⑨ **ENERGY: 342**
⑩ **SHIELD: OFF**
⑪ **TIME: 1**
⑫ **COMMON TOLLAH**

KEY DESCRIPTION

① This is the name of the room you are currently in. (There may be more than one room with this name.) See THE ALIEN COMPLEX.

② Shows that, at the moment, you are not wounded. See WOUNDS.

③ Shows that you have all of your endurance available. See FATIGUE.

④ Shows that your AMBLE system is currently switched off. See COMMANDS for a further discussion of this and the devices referred to in lines ⑦–⑩.

⑤ Lines ⑤, ⑥, and ⑫ appear only when appropriate. Line ⑤ shows that you killed the alien you were just fighting.

⑥ These two messages show how you fared during the previous round of combat. The first line shows that you hit the alien (a Common Tollah, as Line ⑫ shows) with a beam from your powergun, while the second line shows that the Tollah did not succeed in hitting you.

⑦ Shows that your powergun is currently set to a power level of 8.

⑧ Shows that you have five charges left in your blaster.

⑨ Shows the number of units of energy remaining in your powerpack. See ENERGY.

⑩ Shows that your force shield is switched off.

⑪ Shows that you have spent 1 minute in the alien complex.

⑫ Shows the kind of alien (if any) in the room with you.

COMMANDS

Altogether there are 16 commands available to you for maneuvering your character through the alien complex and accomplishing your quest. These are discussed under three major headings: Movement, Combat, and Special Commands. Tables 1-3 summarize these commands and their meanings, and each is described in the following paragraphs. Note that none of these commands should be followed by a carriage return; type only the appropriate key. As a visual aid, the computer will briefly display, in the lower right-hand corner of the screen, the letter command you enter. Generally (except for *P*, which must be followed by a number), you should wait until this letter disappears before entering another command. This will prevent confusion and the possible loss of a command due to trying to enter too many commands too quickly.

Table 1. Movement Commands

What You Enter	Meaning
#1 to 9	Move forward 1 to 9 feet
SHIFT key and 1 to 9	Dodge and move forward 1 to 9 feet
R	Turn right
L	Turn left
V	Turn around (*volte-face*)

Table 2. Combat Commands

What You Enter	Meaning
B	Fire blaster
F	Fire powergun
P	Set powergun level. Followed by message: TO WHAT? Enter the number (1-9) of the new setting you want.
S	Force shield on/off
A	AMBLE system on/off
M	Melee (hand-to-hand combat)

Table 3. Special Commands

What You Enter	Meaning
H	Heal your wounds with your medikit
T	Activate transporter beam
D	Determine depth of present position
C	Count the number of captives released
?	Negotiate with alien creature

Movement

There are five commands that allow you to move from one spot to another ***(see Table 1)***. During a turn you may move up to nine feet. Moving forward always takes one full turn, regardless of how *far* you move (exception: see the AMBLE system, below). The distance just indicates the speed at which you move. You may also turn to the right or left, or completely around. Since *turning* does not take any time, you may combine it with your forward movement for one turn.

To move out of the space you are in, you must move forward. Therefore, for example, to take two steps backward, you must first turn around, and then move two feet forward. On the next turn you may turn around again.

Note that, to move, you must enter a whole number from 1 to 9. You *cannot* use fractions or decimals. Do not enter a "+" in front of the number, and do not type 09. Type only the number itself: **9**.

You can dodge and move any distance by holding the shift key down (as if you were going to type a capital letter) and typing a number from 1 to 9. Dodging reduces your chances of being hit by enemy blaster fire, but it is tiring (see *FATIGUE*). You cannot dodge and fire in the same turn.

Moving at high speed (running) is fatiguing in itself, although you will rarely have to run very far to escape an alien, since none will follow you out of a room. However, it will be waiting if you go back, and of course there is always the possibility that another alien will happen to be in the room you're going into. On the other hand, you are fighting the clock as well as the Tollah, and you can do more exploring —and free more prisoners—if you move faster.

Combat Commands

In a single turn, you may choose from three types of attacks—with blaster **(B)**, with powergun **(F)**, or hand-to-hand **(M)**—and three auxiliary Combat Commands—setting the powergun **(P)** or switching the force shield **(S)** or AMBLE system **(A)** on or off. None of the attacks requires you to be facing the alien you are fighting, although you must at least be in the same room. As always, none of the six commands should be followed by a carriage return (i.e., *do not* push the ENTER or RETURN key).

Firing the Blaster (B). To fire the blaster at an alien, simply type **B**. Preliminary loading or aiming is not required. If you hit the alien, it will be visibly affected, and the message KA-BOOM!! will be printed on the screen. Otherwise, MISSED! will be displayed. If it strikes, a single blaster bolt will destroy a Tollah, though a sentry robot might take as many as three blasts before it ceased functioning. The blaster is not powered by the powerpack and can be used even if you run out of energy. Despite its advantages, however, it has two distinct limitations: it has a limited number of charges, and the noise of its explosions may well attract the attention of nearby aliens.

Using the Powergun (F and P). Firing the powergun is exactly like firing the blaster, except that, instead of B, you type **F**, and a hit will be signaled by the message ZAP! The two weapons, however, are entirely different. The comparatively quiet powergun draws its charge from the powerpack and is useless when your energy supply is depleted (see *ENERGY*). Also unlike the blaster, the fifth beam is no more likely—or unlikely—to finish off an alien than the first; the effects of the powergun are not cumulative. You can adjust the strength of the beam by typing **P**. When the message TO WHAT? appears, simply type the number **(1-9)** of the setting you wish. Note that this takes a full turn, so it can be dangerous if you are being attacked! (Of course, it may also be dangerous to keep a setting that appears to be too low.) The higher the setting on the powergun, the more likely you are to kill or put out of commission the alien you're fighting, but higher settings drain more energy from the powerpack. For example, firing a powergun (even if you miss!) set on 8 would subtract 8 from the energy remaining in your powerpack.

The Shield (S). The shield is an invisible, protective force field that substantially reduces the damage you would otherwise sustain from enemy attacks. It works as well against the claws and teeth of a cerbanth as it does against a sentry robot's blaster bolts, but it renders you neither invulnerable nor invincible. Also—and much to the point—it drains one unit of energy every turn it is on. To switch the shield on, type S. This requires a full turn, but the shield will then remain on for subsequent turns until you switch it off. When the shield is on, typing S will switch it off again.

The AMBLE System (A). AMBLE stands for "**a**ccelerated **m**ovement through **b**io-**e**lectronic **e**nhancement." By speeding up your actions and metabolism, this form of bionic augmentation allows you, in effect, two turns for every one taken by an alien. You can thus move twice, fire twice, or move once and fire once in the time it takes an alien to move *or* fire once. However, "AMBLEing" is quite fatiguing; your body is working so hard that it is impossible to rest (i.e., to regain endurance) while the AMBLE system is activated. Except for the letter used, switching the AMBLE system on or off is just like turning the force shield on or off: just type **A**. Typing A while the AMBLE system is on will turn it off.

Melee (M). As with weapon attacks, you do not have to be facing an alien to fight it hand-to-hand (or -claw), but you must be close—almost touching, in fact. Of course, this allows any of the aliens—even those without blasters—a chance to hit you back. Meleeing does not require energy from the powerpack; nor does it use up charges. it is, however, even more tiring than running. If you are close enough to strike and wish to melee, type **M**. If you try to melee on a turn in which you are not in range, Line 6 of the display will flash "TOO FAR TO HIT," and you will instead rest while the alien fires or charges at you.

Special Commands

The five special commands in *Rescue at Rigel* vary from healing yourself **(H)** to recalling how many prisoners you have released **(C)**. Most take a full turn, but you are also considered to be resting (and regaining endurance) while using them. As always, none requires the use of the RETURN or ENTER key. All the commands are summarized in Table 3 and described more fully in the following paragraphs.

The Medikit (H). Among the handier devices in your possession is the medikit, which allows you to heal (some of) your wounds. To heal yourself with the medikit, type **H**. This can be done anytime, even in the middle of combat, though you could not, of course, attack an alien in the same turn. The number of treatments in the medikit is quite limited; the higher the degree of difficulty chosen at the beginning of the game, the fewer uses available. (The exact number will be displayed on the screen at the beginning of the game.) If you have exhausted the supplies in the medikit, typing H will result only in the depressing message "NONE LEFT" on the display.

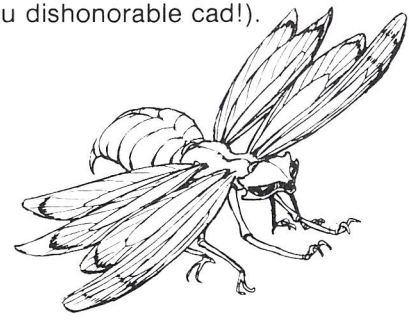
Freeing Prisoners (T). Prisoners appear as small rectangles within certain rooms of the complex. (The more valuable prisoners look slightly different.) Only one prisoner can be in a single room, and prisoners may not always be located in the same rooms or in the same positions inside those rooms. To release a prisoner, you must first move near them and then type **T**. If successful, this will activate the transporter beam that will teleport the captive up to the rescue ship. (This is much like the transporter room on Captain Kirk's *Enterprise*.) If you are too far away for the beam to lock onto the prisoner's position, the message "CAN'T LOCKON" will display; you must move closer and try again. Even if you are close enough, you won't always be able to get a signal to the ship and back again. If your attempt to activate the transporter beam fails, you will be given the message "NO LUCK!" This may happen any number of times, but if you keep trying you will eventually succeed. The display will then flash "BEAMING UP!" and the prisoner will twinkle and disappear. Note that every use of the T command--regardless of whether it is ultimately "successful"—uses a unit of energy from the powerpack.

The T command can also be used to transport *you* to the rescue ship. You can do this from any room in the complex as long as no prisoners are present. (Prisoners are always given preference: that's one of the limitations of being a hero.) You can beam up even during combat—unless your shield is on. The shield's force field interferes with the transporter beam, and typing T with the shield on will get you no better than a "CAN'T LOCKON" message. Switch the shield off **(S)**, and try again.

Determining Depth (D). Because of the teleportals in particular, it is easy to get lost in the alien complex. The D command can help you get your bearings by telling you what floor of the Tollah moonbase you are on. You may try to find your position in this way from any room in the complex: just type **D**. Since this, like the T command, involves communicating with the rescue ship (a tricky operation at best), you may not get a reading on your position, in which case the message "NO LUCK!" will be displayed. If you get through to the ship, a message will tell you what floor you are on: e.g., "LEVEL 4" (the fourth floor down; Level 1 is at the top of the complex and Level 6 at the bottom). As with the T command, every attempt to determine depth—successful or not—uses up one unit of energy.

Counting Prisoners (C). If you lose track of how many captives you have successfully transported up to the rescue ship, the computer will remind you. Just type **C**. This takes no energy and does not constitute a turn.

Negotiation (?). There is an alternative to the ages-old dichotomy of "flight or fight"—negotiation. The **?** command includes everything from explaining to a sentry robot that you're not really covered by his programming, or convincing a cerbanth you're just a human prisoner getting some harmless exercise, to threatening to blow the mandibles off a lowly Common Tollah. Negotiation is not, of course, uniformly successful. Cowing a Common Tollah (which is used to being told what to do) is more effective than brandishing a weapon suggestively at the nearly mindless plasmoid, which is likely to regard a powergun as an appetizer and you as the main course. You can type ? anytime there is an alien in the room with you; it takes no energy, and you may try as often as you wish. However, on any turn that your attempts to negotiate fail, the alien you're dealing with will simply continue advancing, firing, biting, clawing, stinging, or ingesting, as the case may be. (No separate message will be displayed, but you should have no trouble getting the idea.) If your efforts at negotiating are successful, the alien will stop moving and tell you to "PASS, FRIEND!" in peace. You may then move freely, but if you stoop so low as to attack the alien "under a truce flag" (so to speak), the creature is apt to get angry enough to disregard your previous arguments (and justifiably so, you dishonorable cad!).



ENERGY

Except for the blaster and medikit, which have their own (limited) supplies, and the AMBLE system, which is not really a piece of "equipment," all of your equipment is powered by the energy stored in your powerpack. Using related commands subtracts from that energy supply. The **T** (transporter beam) and **D** (depth) commands drain one energy unit from the powerpack each time they are used. The **S** (shield) command does not directly take energy, but the shield itself uses up one unit of energy every turn it is on. Somewhat similarly, the **P** (set power) command takes no energy, but *firing* the powergun (**F**) subtracts as many units of energy as its setting indicates; with the powergun set on 5, it uses 5 units when fired; on 8 it uses up 8 energy units.

The computer keeps track of and displays next to ENERGY the amount of energy *left* in the powerpack. Unlike WOUNDS and FATIGUE, however, this figure is not a percentage; it is the absolute number of energy units remaining. For example, if the display reads

ENERGY: 25

you have only 25 units of energy left, and your powerpack is nearly depleted.

You cannot use more energy than you have available, and when your powerpack is empty (ENERGY: 0), you can no longer use the T, D, S, and F commands. Furthermore, unlike the WOUNDS and FATIGUE ratings, there is no way to recharge the powerpack (to increase the number next to ENERGY). However, even with a depleted powerpack, you can still move, AMBLE, melee, fire your blaster, or heal yourself,

and while you can release no more prisoners, you can escape the moonbase if you get to your rendezvous point while the display reads TIME: 60 (see *Entering and Exiting the Alien Complex*, above). As a rule of thumb, remember that no fatiguing activities (running, dodging, meleeing, AMBLEing) take energy from the powerpack, and nothing which does drain energy is tiring. (Some things, of course—healing, counting released prisoners, etc.—do not decrease either FATIGUE *or* ENERGY.)

FATIGUE

Getting Tired

Your FATIGUE rating simply expresses how much physical energy you have at any given time. The computer display shows how much endurance you have *left*. Therefore, if the display reads

FATIGUE: 100%

you are fresh and untired.

Exceptional exertion results in a lowering of your FATIGUE rating: you get tired. While their exact effects vary, running, dodging, meleeing, and using the AMBLE system are all fatiguing activities. Walking at a medium pace or using most of the Combat or Special Commands is generally not tiring and may, in fact, allow you to "catch your breath" (see *Recovering from Fatigue (Resting),* below).

The amount of effort required by any activity is also affected by the wounds you have taken. The more wounded you are, the more fatiguing it is to move or melee.

If you run out of endurance (if the computer displays a negative percentage next to FATIGUE), you collapse from exhaustion. You may still fire your weapons (though at a reduction in accuracy), heal your wounds, or attempt other nonfatiguing activities, but you will be unable to move or melee until you recover (that is, until a positive FATIGUE percentage is displayed).

Recovering from Fatigue (Resting)

While you can never get your FATIGUE rating above 100% (you can't improve on being fully rested and untired), you can recover from fatigue in a variety of ways. The fastest way is by stopping altogether, but this may be dangerous, and in any case spending a long time in one room is both an inefficent and a dull way to pursue your quest. Firing a weapon, using one of the Special Commands, or even walking slowly allows you to rest and raise your FATIGUE rating. Remember, however, that you cannot rest while on AMBLE; you must switch off the AMBLE system before you can recover from fatigue.

WOUNDS

Whenever you are attacked by an alien creature, there is a chance—even if your force shield is on—that you will be wounded. This may be as slight as the sting of the thornet (which may not be so slight if your shield is off) or as severe as the frenzied slashing of the cerbanth. The computer keeps track of and displays how much damage you have taken on a percentage basis. The number displayed next to WOUNDS is always the percentage that you have *left*. For example, if the display reads

WOUNDS: 90%

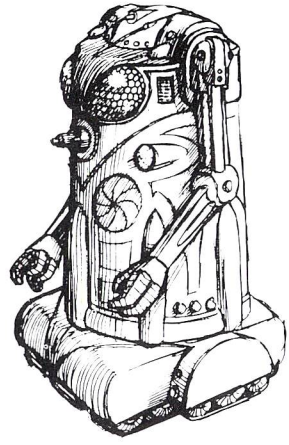
you are still relatively healthy, because only 10% of you has been wounded.

You may heal yourself at any time by using the medikit (the **H** command), though if your wounds are severe a single treatment may not be enough to heal them completely. You may, of course, continue using the H command to heal yourself further until nothing remains in the medikit.

While being wounded causes you to tire more easily (i.e., your FATIGUE rating goes down faster), you can continue to function more-or-less normally until your WOUNDS rating reaches 0%. At that point, obviously, you are dead, and your quest is over.

THE ALIENS

The primary inhabitants of the base are, of course, the Tollah. Although they walk erect and have lost the middle limbs of their distant ancestors, their faceted eyes, mandibular jaws, chitinous exoskeletons, and long, dependent abdomens are clearly insectoid. With crested skulls, four-fingered hands, clawed, almost birdlike feet, angular limbs, expressionless faces, and lavender coloring, their features are singularly unappealing to human tastes. While they are physically similar (almost identical, to human eyes, except for the more shambling walk of the lower caste and the more erect posture of the upper caste), centuries of careful breeding have produced differences in attitude and outlook in the two varieties of what is still one species. HIGH TOLLAH are smug, superior, authoritarian, intolerant, narrow-minded, unimaginative, and set in their ways. COMMON TOLLAH are subservient, insecure, influenceable, unquestioning, obedient, narrow-minded, unimaginative, and set in their ways. High Tollah are visually



distinguished by their headgear and the fact that they are armed with modern blasters. (For their own safety, of course, Common Tollah are not permitted to bear arms—a rationale which serves conveniently to maintain their continuing subservience.)

There are two sorts of armed robots patrolling the complex: hulking, two-meter figures of steel and electronic circuitry resembling giant R2D2's more than larger C3PO's, although their large, faceted eyes and four-fingered hands proclaim their nonhuman origin. A SENTRY ROBOT carries one particularly powerful blaster (not quite the equal of your own Thunderbolt Mark II), while a SENTRY ROBOT2 is armed with two lesser weapons similar to those carried by the High Tollah.

There are three other alien creatures a human intruder might encounter. The most common—and the most dangerous—is the CERBANTH, a six-legged beast seemingly composed of nothing but muscle, chitin, and razor-sharp mandibles, claws, and reflexes. Cerbanths are highly regarded as "garms" (pets and watchdogs, in Sudden Smith's vernacular) by the High Tollah—and rightly so. Despite only moderate size, even a force shield cannot entirely blunt their ferocious attacks, and an unshielded human would be torn to pieces in seconds if he allowed one to get in range.

The fast-moving, elusive THORNET, a large wasp with a triangular head, eight wings, and a particularly nasty stinger, is more a nuisance than anything else—as long as a force shield separates it from human flesh, anyway.

The Tollah employ a unique, organic solution to the problem of of waste disposal: the PLASMOID, a large gray amoebic slug with just barely enough intelligence to avoid Tollah and an appetitie and the capacity to eat anyone—or anything—else. Its normal habitat is the base's disposal, but it is periodically let loose to "vacuum" the complex and may be encountered anywhere. While it is slow of movement, its acidic pseudopods, which can dissolve even tempered steel, make it something best kept at a distance.

THE ALIEN COMPLEX

The Tollah moonbase is a six-floor complex, comprising approximately sixty rooms in all, situated just beneath the surface of an asteroid. Although the top level comprises little more than a single chamber offering direct access to the surface, and the base's full dimensions are not evident until the third level down, the floors—and many of the individual rooms—resemble each other greatly. Even humans build to such patterns, and Tollah are even more regimented by nature and decree. This feature makes it all too easy to get lost or confused and quite difficult to tell which rooms have been searched.

While the importance and the scientific nature of the installation require the presence of an unusual number of High Tollah, the usual Tollah class distinctions are clearly evident in the layout and traffic patterns of the underground structure. The two gravshafts (the liftshaft and the dropshaft) are used for transporting food, equipment, and Common Tollah from floor to floor. The High Tollah make use of a series of teleportals that interconnect the levels and, in fact, both sides of each level—thus avoiding the unpleasant necessity of walking through the quarters of the Common Tollah.

All of the doors in the base (represented on the screen as openings) are, for safety reasons, sealed off by opaque, air-tight force fields that are, nonetheless, normally penetrable by material objects like Tollah and humans. (Hence there is no need to "open" a door to go from one room to another.) A sophisticated one-way "lock," however, which gives a polarized tangibility to the "door," can be used to contain prisoners, although it is automatically deactivated by the entrance of someone from the outside.

The atmosphere in the complex is hot and humid. The floors are constantly wet with a special solution that provides the necessary moisture into the air and inhibits the corrosive habits of the plasmoid (see *THE ALIENS*). The combination of warm air and damp floors produces both a dank smell and, often, a slight mist low in the rooms.

The rooms of the complex are divided functionally into twelve types, ranging from small corridors to forty-by-forty-foot halls. These are described in more detail below.

Anteroom—Loosely speaking, this is the High Tollah equivalent of a living room or personal lounge, a buffer between the intense privacy of the sanctum and the public nature of the work areas; it is the place one High Tollah would meet with another for social purposes. Most are simply decorated and sparsely furnished. The number and comfort of the chairs varies in direct proportion to the sociability of the Tollah whose sanctum connects to the anteroom. Personal belongings are reserved for the sanctum, with the obvious exception of games. Many High Tollah have become attached to Terran chess, and the Tollah equivalent is officially encouraged. The popularity of computer games may confirm the notion of certain classical writers that there is, indeed, some good in the worst of beings. Due to the large number of High Tollah in the installation, anterooms are not uncommon. They are about twenty by twenty (feet).

Commons—Lacking the privilege of privacy of High Tollah, the Common Tollah sleep, interact socially, and even *eat* in the company of their fellows in large multi-purpose rooms containing sixteen bunks, four four-being dining tables, sixteen stools, four easy chairs, sanitary facilities, and approved recreational devices. There are several of these large rooms, all forty by forty and all identical. Normally, of course, High Tollah would be present in a commons only to make an inspection or investigate a disturbance.

Corridor—Each corridor is nothing but a narrow connecting passageway, featureless except for two, three, or four doors.

Disposal—This twenty-by-twenty-foot room is connected to all the others in the complex by a series of waste chutes and small pneumatic tubes. Although particularly complex, dense, or metallic material can be shunted directly to the base's power converters, most waste is absorbed by the sole inhabitant of the room, a plasmoid. The plasmoid's own waste products are removed by special filters in the floor and used as soil nutrient (not, as is sometimes rumored, to feed Common Tollah).

Dropshaft—This is, in effect, the firemen's pole without the pole—an elevator shaft without the elevator. The gravity of the asteroid is so slight (and Tollah control of it so complete) that beings stepping within the dropshaft "fall" at a sedate rate until they reach the floor they wish, where a multitude of projecting grips allow them to swing easily out of the shaft and into an adjacent room. The ten-foot-square, six-floor shaft connects all the levels of the complex and is the main mode of inter-level travel for Common Tollah.

Lab—There are several laboratories of varying size and purpose in the moonbase, although all are devoted to some aspect of the biochemical and biopsychological sciences. Equipment ranges from test tubes to what look like medieval torture devices, sinks to fire pits, treadmills to hypnoprobes (one of which is pictured on the cover), along with a multitude of cages, test cells, video screens, monitoring equipment, and so on. These are likely places to find High or Common Tollah—and some of the prisoners.

Liftshaft—This is simply the converse of the dropshaft. By means of controlled (and reversed) gravity, anyone stepping into the liftshaft floats slowly upward until reaching the desired floor. Aside from the direction of travel, the only difference between this and the dropshaft is that the liftshaft is shorter and serves only the bottom four levels.

Main Chamber—This is one of the largest (twenty-five by forty feet) and certainly the busiest room on each of the main levels. In addition to offering access to a variety of laboratories, corridors, and other chambers, these crowded rooms are devoted to computers, data storage, monitoring and detection equipment, communications, external base defenses, and the preparation and maintenance of the copious records required by Tollah policy-makers. High Tollah pop out of the air and Common Tollah scurry around corners with alarming frequency. You could run into *anything* in a main chamber; it's never empty.

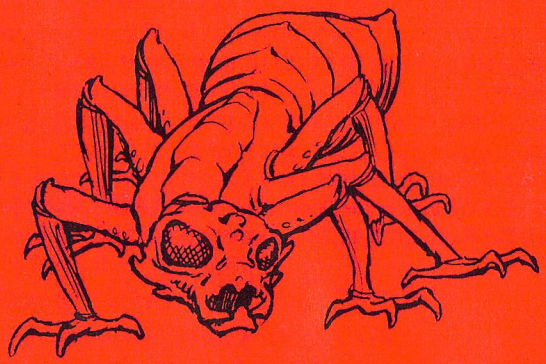
Refectory—While meals for the High and Common Tollah—and the former's pet cerbanths—differ significantly, the food for all is prepared in this single kitchen. From here it is sent to the various commons and

sanctums for consumption. The twenty-five-by-thirty room is full of heating, cooling, freezing, and thawing equipment, storage cabinets, counters, sinks, and so on—just like a human kitchen. Only the smells are different.

Sanctum—Each sanctum is the personal chamber—combining the functions of bedroom, dining room, bathroom, and more—of a single High Tollah. Furnishings vary greatly according to the personality of the resident, though the geometric art found on walls elsewhere in the base is here often far more intricate, and complex lighting is typical. Chairs and bed, while far more comfortable than those found in the commons, are still severe and angular by human standards. The sculpture seems distorted and the colors too harshly bright to human eyes; the purpose of many of the room's objects is unguessable. Normally, the only beings found in a sanctum would be the resident High Tollah, its pet cerbanth, a personal servant or slave, or an alien curiosity. (Human prisoners might fall into either of the latter two categories.) Each sanctum is structurally identical and just slightly larger than the anteroom which provides the only access to it.

Storeroom—The storeroom off the refectory contains foodstuffs, of course, canned, dried, frozen, or preserved, but mostly alien. Other storerooms, typically a bit less than twenty feet square, contain lab supplies and equipment, and other depletable supplies. A reasonably empty one might be used to house alien specimens.

Vestibule—These busy twenty-by-thirty-foot hallways connect the gravshafts with the other rooms in the complex. Some act as annexes to the main chambers; all serve as temporary storage for material and equipment going up and down between levels, and all, perhaps as a natural consequence, tend to acquire rows or layers of miscellaneous junk, "temporarily" set in place for the duration of the Tollah occupation. While anything from a sentry robot to a stray thornet may be found in a vestibule, it is not an uncommon place for Common Tollah to loiter and for those from different commons to meet and mingle in the hallowed job of work avoidance. The upper vestibule, however, being of more limited access, is usually deserted.

COMPUTER GAMES THINKERS PLAY

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